

Ames Service Area Plan for Emergency Services September 23, 2008

A variety of shelter providers, law enforcement, juvenile court services, DHS and community people met on September 2nd and again on September 18, 2008 to discuss plans for emergency services.

There is a plan that follows but there are also a couple of points that this gathering of folks would like to make before that plan is presented.

Considerations

1. The Ames Service Area would like to point out that two out of the three shelters in its area already provide emergency or diversionary type services and the third while not having a formal program also participates in activities to avoid shelter placements. These programs are funded by decat or other community sources. These in fact may account for keeping the number of shelter placements where they are rather than having them increase. While it may be possible to take a bed or two off line from the Ft Dodge shelter this was seen as somewhat non-productive because this shelter is heavily used and it is likely that if we did, it would be using just as many beds but more of these beds would be paid for as unallocated or non-guaranteed beds. The usage of this shelter would remain the same.

The	Ames Shelter has 11 guaranteed beds and is licensed for 15
The	Quakerdale has 10 guaranteed beds and is licensed for 15
The	Fort Dodge has 12 guaranteed beds and is licensed for 20

2. As shelter expenditures go the Ames Service Area is not heavily underutilized.

3. The one shelter with the most guaranteed beds is also the one with the highest percentage utilization.

4. With the proposed plan it would be counterproductive to allow use outside of the service area. The primary reason for this is the amount of dollars available to fund this service. It just isn't enough to accept referrals from other areas.

5. Shelters are generally reluctant to give up beds when they don't have any idea what others are going to do, and when they are operating close to that 10 guaranteed bed number which is believed to be a break even point.

6. It is believed that a more equitable solution to guaranteed beds going unused is to decrease the number of guaranteed beds but allow more money for unallocated beds. This would allow the beds to be used where the demand is and the expenditures would also be reflective of the demand.

The Plan

Youth and Shelter Services is willing to eliminate one of their guaranteed shelter beds in exchange for utilizing approximately \$28,500 for an expansion of their emergency services to divert children from shelter. These children would be either referrals from DHS or JCS. The services would be designed to stabilize disrupting home situations by providing family mediation, a 24 hour helpline, and other diversionary activities. YSS could also provide time out placements which would not count as CFSR placements since they would not be funded out of state or federal money. It is possible for a referral of this type to utilize a shelter care bed but have it supported by community funding.

YSS is proposing to be reimbursed at the rate of 1/12th of \$28,500 or \$2375 per month. The YSS shelter would continue to staff for 15 beds and this new service could start almost immediately. If this plan is acceptable the service will quickly be more thoroughly fleshed out and implemented as soon as possible.

Evaluation

The aim of emergency services is to provide for children's immediate needs without the removal of the child(ren) and the consequent reliance on shelter. Numbers of children participating would be one piece of data to collect but the more important one would be to count the number of participants who did not utilize shelter or were able to remain in or be returned to their original living arrangement.